

Municipal Council Meeting Minutes
Town Hall Auditorium
Tuesday, June 13, 2006 @ 7:00 PM

Pledge of Allegiance – Councilor Pinierio

Roll Call: Mario Pinierio, Michelle Thone, Roger Benson, Hank Brennick, Ann Connolly King, Robert Lavoie, Alison Lindstrom, Christopher Lawrence
Donna McClure – late

Accept Minutes May 9, 2006 and May 24, 2006 Councilor Benson moves to accept - Councilor Pinierio second Voted – Unanimous

Public Comment

Amesbury Fire Department Study

Councilor Brennick asks why there was missing information in the study from the Fire Department. Chief Shute explains that it took a little longer to get the compiled information from his computer but, it was handed over to the firm conducting the study and he does not know why it was missing. He noticed that the information was missing when the study was complete. Councilor Brennick asks for an addendum to the study so the members of the council will have that information. Chief Shute states he would provide the council with a copy of the information that he handed over to the firm. Councilor King thanks the Fire Department for working so cooperatively with Matrix and asks the council to revisit the Fire Department study in six months to see what progress has been made. Chief Shute states they have already started implementing improvements that were financially easy to do. Others will take time due to the financial impact. Councilor Thone thanks Chief Shute for making a significant reduction in overtime by making a change in how they deploy personnel. She asks Chief Shute if he has taken any steps to start the process of implementing any of the suggestions in the study. Chief Shute states he has started by getting in touch with the National Fire Academy for information on policy and procedures and with other fire departments who have already updated their procedures. Some of the other suggestions such as record keeping and training etc. have started to be implemented, the bigger items have a cost associated with them and he would like to take some time to digest the whole report before jumping in. Councilor Thone feels the study is a great guide and agrees with Councilor King to have an update in six months to see where the department is on a lot of the recommendations. Councilor Thone brings up one of the comments that there are issues with the speed with which calls for service are being processed through the dispatching process. She states the study implies there is an issue with communication with the two dispatch centers. Chief Shute responds it is a problem because there is only one server. IMC has a problem with timing and their clocks which in turn throws off the calls. To solve the problem you would need two separate servers at a cost of up to \$50,000. The other side of the problem is the actual location of the dispatch. A joint dispatch center can not fit in either the Police or Fire buildings; it is physically impossible. Councilor Thone asks Chief Shute what his thoughts are of regional dispatch. Chief Shute states there is an effort to fund a study on regional dispatch and he is open to researching it.

Brian Moran – Amesbury Fire Department – Mr. Moran feels EMS transport is a cost effective, revenue generating system that allows for minimum staffing of fire suppression and EMS personnel to do their work.

James Bateman – Amesbury Fire Department – Mr. Bateman supports the study and feels it is a good guideline.

James Thieverge, Sanborn Ter. - Mr. Thieverge urges support from the Council for bill #2006-048 Creation of an Energy Resources Commission – Councilor Lindstrom sponsor. He also encourages competition between cable companies to lower rates and comments on Councilor Brennicks comments regarding the bylaws saying that they are a mess.

Stan Swartz, 105 Highland Street – Mr. Swartz states Amesbury has a lot of elected officials that care very passionately about Amesbury who may not always agree but, put the best interests of the schools and taxpayers first. He hopes that the full Municipal Council will support the Finance Committee recommendation for the School budget.

Teresa Axten – Ms. Axten urges the Municipal Council to take the Finance Committee recommendation and pass the School budget as was recommended.

Peter Hoyt – Mr. Hoyt, speaking as a life long resident and graduate of Amesbury High School, thanks the Finance Committee for their support of the school budget and asks the Municipal Council to support their recommendation.

Steve O'Connor, 3 Moody Street – Mr. O'Connor, Principal Amesbury Middle School thanks the Finance Committee for their work and is hopeful that the Municipal Council follows their recommendation and passes the school budget.

Gail Brown, 2 Woodlawn Street – Ms. Brown asks the Council to support the School budget without any further cuts.

Cindy Carter, 91 Congress St. – Ms. Carter believes the requested funding for FY07 in the school budget is reasonable and required in order to provide quality education. She asks the council to support the Finance Committee recommendation.

Deb Bibeau, 17 Monroe Street – Ms. Bibeau thanks the Finance Committee for their efforts and for supporting unanimously the school budget as presented. She asks the Municipal Council to fully support the school committee budget as recommended by the Superintendent.

Cathy Schultz, Haverhill Road – Ms. Schultz thanks the Finance Committee for recommending the School Committee budget as written and urges the whole Municipal Council to pass the school budget as written.

Paul Knittle, 265 Lions Mouth Road – Mr. Knittle asks the Municipal Council to follow the Finance Committees recommendation and pass the school budget.

Chris Hyde, 17 Acadia Kimball Road – Mr. Hyde thanks the Finance Committee for voting unanimously to support the school budget and hopes the full council will do the same. Mr. Hyde has contacted Rep. Costello and Senator Baddour to attend a meeting on June 20th to discuss local aide for Amesbury.

Mike Brown, Planning Board Chair – Mr. Brown asks for the Municipal Council to support the Permitting Coordinator position. He states that the money for secretarial support for Planning Board, ZBA and the Conservation Commission has been cut in order to support this new position. He feels these boards will not be able to function properly without the new position primarily because MGL has

many time sensitive deadlines that need to be met. The result would be the Town would pay with undesirable developments that would over burden the town. It would be a much greater cost to the town in the long run.

Howard Dalton, Planning Board Member – Mr. Dalton has seen the work on the Planning Board increase 5 fold since 1977. He states that the zoning bylaw and the sub-division control law has been built up based on input from hundreds of citizens through master plan and input at the Planning Board meetings. The document is a statement about what the town wants Amesbury to be built. In order to have that happen there has to be people in place to insure that developers are treated fairly, know the rules and regulations and that their plans are handled in a timely fashion. He urges the Municipal Council to consider this position.

Matt Sheryl, ZBA Chairman – Mr. Sheryl feels the Council does not have any idea the mess they will create if they do not support the Permitting Coordinator position. He fully supports what the Mayor is trying to do. There are many 40B projects coming into town it will be very difficult for the ZBA to make these developments good for the town of Amesbury without the proper help. He feels the board will not be able to continue to meet without proper secretarial advice and work. He urges the Municipal Council to please reconsider the Finance Committee recommendation.

Betsy Gibb, Chairman of Conservation Commission – Ms. Gibb states the Con Com only has a part time agent and now that the secretarial position has been eliminated from the budget it is totally inadequate. She has seen over the last seven years the number and complexity of the projects increase dramatically. She feels a half time agent is wholly inadequate and now for her to assume the responsibilities of administrative function which is mandated by law, under the states wetlands protection act, will make the commission unable to perform the job assigned to them by the town. She feels the idea of a Permitting Coordinator for the 3 boards is a fabulous idea and asks the council to restore the money for the Permit Coordinator.

Tracy Chalifour, Birchwood Point – Ms. Chalifour, who is a direct abutter to a 40B project, has experienced first hand how the lack of a centralized position can have a negative impact and potential consequences for any project before the town. Without such a position Amesbury could face numerous and unnecessary law suits and the costs associated due to procedure flaws. She fully supports this position.

Council Response to Public Comment

Councilor King thanks everyone for coming to the meeting stating that Amesbury chose to have a representative form of government and she feels it is critical that people come to council meetings to voice concerns to elected officials.

Councilor Thone first comments on the bylaws. She believes the bylaws are a mess and they really need to be cleaned up. With regard to the loss of a possible Permit Coordinator position she believes the Mayor should have submitted that as an administrative order. Secondly, the money had not been taken from the budget; it was simply a recommendation from the Finance Committee. It will be up to the department head on how they will deal with that issue if the money is removed from that budget. She feels if that position is not funded and the department head is not able to find the funds within the budget the Mayor can submit a supplemental budget to refund the secretarial position. With regard to the schools she is very proud of the schools. She thinks the finance committee sent a message, and is pretty confident the Municipal council will support it, that the children are a priority this year. In

years past it was the schools that have been hit. She hopes that by making the schools a priority this year there will be support for reductions in the other departments. Eighty to ninety percent of the budget is personnel and if there are to be no job losses you have to look at the benefits. She urges the unions to go to the table and do what they can in that area; the town can not sustain 15% increases in the benefits. Next year the schools may not be so lucky. Councilor Thone believes the tax burden can not be sustained by the income of this community.

Councilor Pinierio states he supports the school and agrees with Councilor Thone that the unions have start looking at the costs of benefits.

Councilor McClure states that it was good for her to sit through the budget hearings as a Councilor, having sat through many of them on the other side of the table. All of the department heads truly justified their budgets. She felt that the schools were a priority this year but, something has to change because Amesbury has a problem with income and tax burden. Councilor McClure said they went through the budget line by line and did the best they could for the town of Amesbury.

Councilor Benson thanks the Finance Committee for a very thoughtful and thorough process and hopes the Council, almost without exception, follows their recommendation. He supports the Permitting Coordinator position saying the permitting process is a mess and with the fees collected it would pay for itself. To not fund this position would leave those boards in a bad position because their secretarial support has already been cut. Speaking in support of the school Councilor Benson says 7 years ago there was almost 1 million dollars in choice out money he see the decision on Saturday is either and reinvest it in Amesbury or send the million dollars somewhere else. He feels the Amesbury School system has come a long way, it has a good reputation now and it needs to be preserved. He does believe there is a tax problem in Amesbury and hopes the Council takes the recommendations of the Finance Committee and passes them.

Councilor McClure believes the Permitting Coordinator is a great idea but at the wrong time. She feels that in addition to the \$30,000 salary, most of which comes from eliminating the board's secretaries, there are a lot of extra expenses in terms of benefits. She has not seen any growth stymied in Amesbury and understands that the Planning Board and ZBA may be stressed but this year is not a good time for a new position. It wasn't without thought but something had to give.

Councilor Lawrence feels that the Schools are the top priority but not to forget all Amesbury residents and the seniors who struggle on a daily basis as well.

Recess 8:25 – 8:35

Second Readings

2006-049 An Ordinance to request that the Municipal Council accepts a gift of a park bench in memory of Marie Kudym from her family – Mayor Kezer sponsor cont.

President Lawrence reads 2006-049 into the record.

Councilor Benson moves for approval of 2006-049 as submitted. Councilor Pinierio seconded.
Voted – Unanimous

Public Hearings

2005-055 Transfer to Snow and Ice Removal – Mayor Kezer sponsor cont.

President Lawrence reads 2006-055 into the record.

Councilor Brennick motions to accept 2006-055. Councilor Thone seconded.

Voted - Unanimous

2006-056 Transfer between General Department Funds – Mayor Kezer sponsor cont.

President Lawrence reads 2006-056 into the record and opens the public hearing.

Councilor Lindstrom asks Mike Basque why there is so much extra money in the employee benefits fund. Mr. Basques explains it is estimated what funds will be needed a year and a half in advance so if there are any shifts in the plans there will be extra, you don't want to be short.

Councilor Benson moved the recommendation of the Finance Committee for approval. Councilor Pinierio second. Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

2006-057 Transfer within the Landry Stadium Fund – Mayor Kezer sponsor cont.

President Lawrence reads 2006-057 into the record and opens the public hearing.

Councilor Lindstrom motions to accept 2006-057, Councilor Benson second.

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

2006-058 Appropriation to the Stabilization Fund – Mayor Kezer sponsor cont.

President Lawrence reads 2006-058 into the record and opens the public hearing.

Councilor Benson thanks Mayor Kezer for transferring a substantial amount of money to the stabilization fund.

Councilor Thone states the town now has \$282,700 in the stabilization fund and a town of Amesbury's size should have approximately \$2,000,000, but it is a start.

Councilor Pinierio motions to accept 2006-058 as proposed by the Mayor, Councilor Benson second. Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

New Business

Late File

Councilor Thone motions to accept 2006-066 and 2006-067 as a late files, Councilor Lavoie second – Voted 8 Yes, 1 No (Benson)

2006-063 \$5,000 donation from The Provident Community Foundation – Mayor Kezer sponsor

President Lawrence read 2006-063 into the record.

Councilor Lindstrom motions to refer 2006-063 to Finance Committee and schedule a public hearing at the Council's July meeting, Councilor Pinierio second.

Voted – Unanimous

2006-064 \$1,200 grant from the Essex National Heritage – Mayor Kezer sponsor

President Lawrence reads 2006-064 into the record.

Councilor Benson motions to refer 2006-064 to the Finance Committee and schedule a public hearing at the Council's July meeting, Councilor McClure second.

Voted – Unanimous

2006-065 \$10,000 grant from the Governor's Highway Safety Bureau – Mayor Kezer sponsor
President Lawrence reads 2006-055 into the record.
Councilor Benson motions to refer 2006-065 to the Finance Committee and schedule a public hearing at the Council's July meeting, Councilor Lindstrom second
Voted – Unanimous

2006-066 To Authorize liabilities in excess of appropriations under MGL Chapter 44, Section 31 – Mayor Kezer sponsor
President Lawrence reads 2006-066 into the record.
Councilor Benson motions to refer 2006-066 to the Finance Committee and schedule a public hearing at the Council's July meeting, Councilor Lavoie second
Voted – Unanimous

2006-067 An Ordinance to Re-organize and Divide the Department of Community and Economic Development – Councilor Thone and McClure sponsor
President Lawrence reads 2006-067 into the record.
Councilor Benson motions to refer 2006-067 to the Ordinance Committee and Finance Committee and schedule a public hearing at the July 11th Council meeting. Councilor Thone second.
Voted – Unanimous

Communication from Elected Officials, Boards and Commissions

Councilor Lavoie read his report from the Ad-hoc Committee meeting on the Town Clerk's position (attached).

Councilor Benson motions to adjourn, Councilor Lindstrom second – Voted Unanimous 9:15 PM